International Academic Workshop

The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Turkey

14-16 February 2018

Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies
Philipps-Universität Marburg

On 14-16 February 2018, Philipps-Universität Marburg’s Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies will be hosting an international academic workshop on “The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Turkey.” The purpose of this workshop will be to investigate contemporary (counter)hegemonic discourses on culture in Turkish society. Political power in modern, capitalist societies, as outlined by Antonio Gramsci in his famous Prison Notebooks, works through consensus more than force. Consensus, however, is based on the ruling elite's ability to obtain cultural hegemony and to establish its world view as the commonly accepted norm. Accordingly, culture must be seen as a site of ideological struggle and a terrain of containment and resistance, in which different world views and ways of life compete with each other. From this perspective, the question of how a person lives—or, more particularly, how a person displays his or her way of life publicly—can easily turn into an ideological power struggle, resulting in the stigmatization of the ideological ‘other.’ Lifestyle presence, in this sense, can be an efficient means to lay claim to public space and to demand or contest political power. The issue of culture will be investigated from this perspective.

The organizers' approach to culture relies in great part on the tradition of British Cultural Studies. The production of culture is thus not restricted to the realm of the arts (theatre, cinema, visual arts, literature, etc.), but also explicitly includes the realm of the ordinary—that is, performative acts such as, for instance, consuming alcoholic beverages in public, wearing a particular form of dress, or using a specific rhetoric. Consequentially, this workshop aims to critically engage with questions of everyday cultural politics and institutionalized cultural policies alike. The organizers seek at bringing together researchers from different academic fields who are interested in critically discussing the politics of culture in contemporary Turkey. The outcome of this workshop will function as a starting point for a joint book project.

The organizers have invited academics from the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, education studies, film and media studies, gender studies, memory studies, political science, religious studies, and urban studies to discuss issues such cultural resistance and containment, neo-religious conservatism, neo-Ottomanism, secular and religious lifestyle practices, the politics of difference and representation, cultural policies and the politics of memory and the re-invention of national history.

This workshop is part of the program “Blickwechsel. Contemporary Turkey Studies,” funded by Stiftung Mercator. It is organized and convened by Pierre Hecker, Kaya Akyıldız, Ivo Furman, and Betül Sakınır. In addition to our invited speakers, this workshop is open to the interested public under the precondition of having registered in advance.
Workshop Program

Wednesday, February 14

18.30 Meet & Greet at Marburg’s Jazz and Blues Club “Cavete”

Thursday, February 15

The workshop takes place at Philipps-University’s newly built Forschungszentrum Deutscher Sprachatlas (lecture hall 001 on the ground floor). For directions, see the map at the end of this document.

09.30-10.00 Registration and reception

10.00-10.15 Official welcome by Albrecht Fuess, Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS), Marburg


11.00-11.15 Coffee break

11.15-12.15 Panel I: Body Politics (Chair: Ines Braune)

“Quotidian Gestures as Choreographies of Dissent: A Study on the Recent Political Landscape of Turkey in Five Movements” Gurur Ertem, Founding Co-Director iDANS, Istanbul

“Soccer against Gymnastics: Conservative-Nationalist Criticism of the Kemalist Body Politic,” Can Evren, Duke University, Durham

12.15-13.00 Lunch break

13.00-14.00 Panel II: Cultural Resistance and the Politics of Visibility (Chair: Ivo Furman)


14.00-15.00 **Panel III: The Politics of Civil Society** (Chair: Pierre Hecker)

“Welcome to Dystopia: ‘The New Istanbul.’ A view into the counter-hegemonic discourse established by a group of ecological activists in Turkey today,” Julia Lazarus, Artist, Filmmaker and Curator, Berlin

“The ‘Womanhood’ Boundaries of the New Turkey,” Gülşen Çakıl Dinçer, Adıyaman Üniversitesi, Adıyaman

15.00-15.30 Coffee break

15.30-17.00 **Panel IV: Popular Media** (Chair: Albrecht Fuess)

“Writing visual history of Turkey: ‘glorious history’ in mainstream cinema vs ‘complicated history’ in arthouse films,” Diliara Brileva, Kazan Federal University

“Resurrection as reaction: competing visions of Turkey’s (proto) Ottoman past in *Magnificent Century* and *Resurrection Ertuğrul,*" Josh Carney, American University of Beirut

“Between resistance and surrender: a comparison of 1980s and 2010s satirical magazines,” Valentina Marcella, L'Orientale University, Napoli

19.00 **Workshop Dinner**, Restaurant “Market,” Markt 11 (market square, old city)  
https://www.market-marburg.de/galerie/

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**Friday, February 16**

09.30 –10.30 **Panel V: Urban Politics** (Chair: Ayşe Çavdar)

“Actually Existing Conservatism’ in Turkey: Ethnography of the ‘Majority’ at the Peripheries,” Esra Can Mollaer, Middle East Technical University, Ankara


10.30 –10.45 Coffee break
10.45-12.15 **Panel VI: Minority Politics** (Chair: Pierre Hecker)

“No Dancing in the Streets: Staging Roman Belonging in Turkey and the World.,” Danielle V. Schoon, Ohio State University, Columbus

“Advantageous, Privileged, and Hegemonic: A Sketch of Legal/Institutional, Political and Cultural Limits of Sunni Supremacism in Contemporary Turkey,” Kaya Akyıldız, Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi, Istanbul

“Violent Re-entrenchments: The tensions within the Power Bloc as revealed in the İmralı Minutes,” Kumru Toktamış, Pratt Institute Brooklyn, NY

12.15-13.00 Lunch break

13.00-14.00 **Panel VII: Memory Politics** (Chair: Kaya Akyıldız)

“Representations of Ottoman History in Contemporary Turkey and the Case of Abdulhamid II: Towards a New Historical Authenticity?,” Caner Tekin, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

“Remembering Through Places: Treasure Hunts and National History in Contemporary Turkey,” Erol Sağlam, Birkbeck University of London

14.00-14.30 Coffee break

14:30-17.00 **Concluding remarks and further proceedings**

*This final part of the workshop is open only to invited speakers and closed to the public!*
The Organizers

Pierre Hecker is a senior researcher and lecturer at the Department of Islamic Studies at the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) at Philipps-Universität Marburg.

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Kaya Akyıldız is a professor of Sociology at Istanbul Bahçeşehir University (BAU).

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Ivo Furman is a professor at the Faculty of Media and Communication Systems at Istanbul Bilgi University.

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Betül Sakınır is a graduate student at the University of Bonn and an assistant in the present research project “‘Ne mutlu ateistim diyene.’ Atheism & The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Turkey.”

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Important Addresses

CNMS: Deutschhausstr. 12
Hotel Marburger Hof: Elisabethstr. 12
Sprachatlas: Pilgrimstein 16
You can take the train from Regionalbahnhof to Marburg Hauptbahnhof with a changeover at Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof.

For further information on the train connections between Frankfurt Airport/Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof and Marburg Hauptbahnhof, please visit http://www.deutschebahn.com/en/start/
**How to get where:**

**From the main railway station to the Hotel Marburger Hof:**
You can easily reach Marburger Hof from the main railway station by 7 to 10 walking minutes.
From the main exit of the railway station you go straight, cross the river bridge and follow the street for about 500 m. Cross the street and you will be right before the hotel.

Alternatively you can also take the buses no. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 from near the main railway station to the bus stop “Elisabethkirche”. It is the second bus stop from the station. You then just need to get back to the church and cross the street right in front of it and walk about 50 to 70 m to the right.

**From Hotel Marburger Hof to Sprachatlas:**
You can easily reach the Sprachatlas of the University by a 7 to 10 minutes walk by keeping straight ahead over the crossing in front of the Elisabethkirche and following the street “Pilgrimstein” until you reach the huge parking garage to your right. The Sprachatlas is on the other side of the street right in front of you.

Alternatively you can also take the buses no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 from the bus stop “Elisabethkirche” to the bus stop “Rudolphsplatz”.
You then just need to get through the passage next to the bus stop and then take the street to your right side for 200 m.
Invited Speakers' Abstracts and Biographies

Gurur Ertem

Quotidian Gestures as Choreographies of Dissent: A Study on the Recent Political Landscape of Turkey in Five Movements

By fusing insights from political theory, cultural sociology, social movement studies as well as dance and performance studies, my interdisciplinary research examines specific moments from recent social upheavals in Turkey as compelling examples to rethink the relation between the aesthetic, affective, and corporeal dimensions of the "political." In particular, the author's focus is on "the standing man" non-violent protest of the Gezi Uprising; the deployment of humor as political weapon in and around the Gezi Uprising; "the earth tables" initiated by Anti-capitalist Muslims in July 2013; the 450 km long Justice March of June - July 2017; and the still continuing hunger strike launched in March 2017 by two public employees who were arbitrarily and unlawfully dismissed by decree-law from their positions since the imposition of State of Emergency rule in Turkey on July 20, 2016. From a qualitative methodological orientation, the paper aims to answer the following questions: What is the social, political, and cultural dynamics through which everyday gestures such as walking, standing, and eating become forceful political acts? By which tools and particular choreographies of the social do individual and collective bodies lay claim to endangered public spaces and extend the public sphere of appearance? How do bodies in assembly contest hegemonic discourses by laying claim to public spaces differently? How do bodies mobilize vulnerability for resistance? Antonio Gramsci's emphasis on the cultural dimension of political power and hegemony; Hannah Arendt's reflections on the public sphere and political action; the challenges Chantal Mouffe introduces to prevalent understandings of the "political," and Judith Butler and Zeynep Gambetti's recent discussions on the politics of/with the body and performative theories of assembly inform the political-theoretical backbone of the study. The approach uses the figure of choreography as a paradigm for performative practices—online and offline—that do not represent a pre-established script for organizing bodies in space and time, but as an "open apparatus" that engenders the "space in-between," the site where, for Arendt, political action takes place.

Can Evren

Soccer against Gymnastics: Conservative-Nationalist Criticism of the Kemalist Body Politic

Recep Tayyip Erdogan's son, Bilal Erdogan, recently told the public in a speech that the use of recorders in public music education and rhythmic gymnastics in public physical education during the Kemalist era have done more harm to national culture than anyone can measure. Public criticism of Kemalist interest in gymnastics is not new, however. It has long been part and parcel of conservative-nationalist struggle for cultural hegemony. Based on original research Evren's dissertation, this paper will analyze the development of two competing images of the Turkish body politic from the 1950s until the present: one based on non-competitive physical education and gymnastics taught in public schools originally inspired by interwar fascism and the other based on a spirit of competitive masculinity outside the school, symbolized by soccer. This paper argues that this division grew into public significance as soccer developed into the popular pastime of young men. The contrast is often interwoven with a global ideology of sports juxtaposing a Global Southern sports culture based on intuitionism, artistry, improvisation, and unschooled movement whereas a Global Northern sports culture is based on rationalism, science, rhythm, and schooled movement. Soccer belongs to the former and the streets, gymnastics to the latter and schools. Soccer's populist appeal as opposed to gymnastics' perceived elitism were

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Can Evren is the founding co-director of iDANS International Contemporary Dance and Performance Festival (Istanbul) where she's been responsible for curatorial research, programming, and publications since 2006. She received her Ph.D. in Sociology from The New School for Social Research (New York) in 2016 with the thesis titled "European Dance: The Emergence and Transformation of a Contemporary Dance Art World (1989-2013)." She specializes in the sociology of culture and arts; the body and social theory; and critical theory. Additionally, being immersed in the contemporary dance culture for two decades as dancer, dramaturge, programmer, and scholar, she edited several books on the topic such as "Dance on Time; "Solo?" in Contemporary Dance, and "Yirmicinci Yüzyılda Dans Sanatı". Currently, she's co-editing the publication "Bodies of Evidence: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Politics of Movement" as well as doing further research and writing on politics of/with the body; affective and aesthetic dimensions of the "political" with a focus on recent social movements; and social psychology. Ertem is currently an Akademie Schloss Solitude Fellow (Stuttgart) in the Humanities.

Can Evren holds a BA (2009) and MA (2012) in Sociology from Bogazici University, Istanbul. Since 2013, he has been studying towards a doctoral degree in the Cultural Anthropology Department at Duke University, USA. He is interested in the intersections of social sciences, humanities, and sports. He specializes in fields like global history of sports, sports sociology, social studies of the body, nationalism, modern Turkish history, political economy, and economic anthropology. He is currently writing a doctoral thesis at Duke University, tentatively titled "In and Against Europe: Turkish Football, Corporatism, and Competition," which studies the role of soccer in creating competing nationalist ideologies and myths about Turkey's place vis-a-vis Europe. He is also a translator of books and articles between Turkish and English like Doğu Batı Mimesis ve Çağışan İktisadi Teoriler. He was given the Mehmet Küçük Award in Theoretical Translation in 2010. He also keeps a blog at canevren.wordpress.com.
woven into a new narrative, depicting Kemalism as part of the Global North (West) and anti-Kemalism of the Global South (non-West). This also sanctions a rival image of the body politic based on un schooled competitive civilian masculinity against Kemalist ideals of public schooling and disciplined masculinity. Understanding soccer’s role in delegitimizing Kemalism since the 1970s is crucial for understanding how conservative-nationalist and populist current shave gradually outcompeted Kemalists in the hegemonic struggle over Turkey’s cultural institutions.

Cengiz Haksöz

Politics and Culture of (In)Visibilities in Turkey: Practices, Regulations and Discourses Around Alcohol Consumption since the 2000s

Politics of visibilities and invisibilities are closely related to the existing power relations in the society. Dominant groups aim to control the (in) visibilities of groups as well as their ideologies, religious affiliations, and worldviews. They can stretch to various spheres of everyday life, such as religious landscapes, ethnoreligious identities, gender, body images and urban planning among other examples. Politics of (in) visibilities do not necessarily need to be implemented overtly. Such measures are normalized and hidden through dispersed and various power and state institutions. Modern Turkey carries a heritage of state-sponsored politics of (in) visibilities of the Ottoman Imperial practices and the Islamic tradition. For instance, until the second half of the nineteenth century, non-Muslim groups were not allowed to build temples higher than the mosques. The

Islamic urban and housing practices regulate not only the visibility of interior and exterior of the dwellings but also the female-male division of home space. In modern Turkey, politics of (in) visibilities have continued to be implemented in public life. In alignment with nation-state building practices public space was dominated to make visible the Turkish nationalist ideology through various landscapes, such as monuments, museums, urban squares, and religious spaces. When there is a major shift in power relations as in the case of the contemporary Turkey, the newly dominant group seek to restructure the existing politics of (in) visibilities. This paper analyzes the change in politics of (in) visibilities during the AKP rule in Turkey by focusing on practices, regulations, and discourses around alcohol consumption. The approach evaluates how AKP by regulating production, selling, and advertisement of alcoholic beverages aims to make the counter-ideologies invisible.

Elif Çiğdem Artan

“Counter Reflection”: Resistance in Exhibition Room

Elif Çiğdem Artan received her BA degree in Sociology (Galatasaray University, Istanbul) and MA degree in Anatolian Civilizations and Cultural Heritage Management (Koç University, Istanbul). She is currently conducting her PhD research at TU Berlin – IGK – Center for Metropolitan Studies. Her research interests span over museology, archives, urban, and digital culture.

Cengiz Haksöz graduated from Political Science and International Relations, did his Masters in Sociology, and is writing his Ph.D. Thesis in Anthropology. Haksöz also taught courses as a part-time instructor such as sociology of food, anthropology of tourism, and ethnography of the Balkans at various universities. Currently, Haksöz is wrapping up his dissertation on conflict avoidance strategies in post-tension peripheral minority cities in Bulgaria at the University of Pittsburgh.

WITNESS, New York based NGO, conceptualizes video as a fighting tool for human rights: “See it, Film it, and Change it.” In other words, video activists capture field with the aim of unfolding the unspoken truth, and they document counter - narratives of national memory. It is also argued that documenting demonstrations assists to prevent excessive use of police violence. Activist camera means control over police. This research aims to discuss the politics of memory in the perspective of temporality through video activism by focusing on “Counter Reflection” exhibition where resistance on June 1st, 2013 in Ankara brought back to the city. The exhibition was organized by Seyr-i Sokak Video Collective, and they expose their goal as following: “Basically what we wanted to do with the Counter Reflection Exhibition is to serve the footage captured by the police and surveillance cameras to public, regardless of how and by whom they were recorded, for they construct the memory of social struggle from another point of view and yet they are left out of court files and kept out of sight on trials.” In this regard, “Counter Reflection” poses a series of questions: What does an image of resistance mobilize in the memory of individuals? Which moment? Which time? How does an exhibition room host resistance? Does it connect back to the streets? Can museums play a role in the construction of recent past social memory? How archiving born digital materials contribute in to construction of social memory? This project is composed of a series of semi - oriented interviews with Seyr-i Sokak members, and also a visual examination of exhibited videos in order to interrogate the conceptual presumption of activism - logy — as a new logos signifying learning from activism.
Julia Lazarus
Welcome to Dystopia: “The New Istanbul” A view into the counter-hegemonic discourse established by a group of ecological activists in Turkey today.

“And one day, the human, one of the guests of this hidden heaven, fell under the illusion that he could be the master of all creatures. He fattened as he consumed; he consumed as he fattened. As the monuments of arrogance he constructed mushroomed in cities, cities sprawled and started occupying hither and thither.” (From the picnic of NFD in Istanbul’s 3rd Airport Construction site.)

Since the 1980s the population of Istanbul has risen rapidly. Today the metropolitan area of Istanbul ranks 23rd among the largest in the world and continues to grow. In cooperation with international investors former rural areas are given the metropolitan status to be developed for maximum profit. Located North of Istanbul, the Belgrade Forest has been under protection since the 16th century for its importance in supplying water and fresh air to the city. Until today the forested area has shrunken from 13,000 to 5,500 hectares. Recently it was further divided by the third beltway connecting the third Bosporus bridge to the third airport. Concrete stretches over the kilometers on the European as well as Asian side of the Bosporus and along the coasts of the Marmara Sea. The master plan for the future Greater Istanbul implies to relocate large parts of the population from the inner city districts to the newly built satellite towns. The next major project, a channel between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, is already in the planning stage. Istanbul, once built on seven hills, is devouring entire coasts, mountains and forests. In 2016, the author began to work on a film about the ecological activist group Kuzey Ormanları Savunması, K.O.S., she visited construction sites, participated in the gatherings of local residents and got an insight into the organized civil resistance against the capital-driven destruction of the common spaces. For the presentation, the author will focus on several scenes of her film.

Gülşen Çakıl Dinçer
The “Womanhood” Boundaries of the New Turkey
Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party has promoted Islam as a core value of the new nation it attempted to build following the 2007 general elections. This presentation will focus on KADEM (Women and Democracy Association) and its effects on the formation of the “new women identity” which was a major element of this identity building process. Women, who define themselves as conservative, pious, and Muslim have become more visible in the public sphere since the 1970s in Turkey. They position themselves vis-a-vis a range of “others” such as secular feminists, Kemalism’s discourse on women and finally conservative, pious, and Muslim men have been crucial in their subjectification process.

A new approach, which is institutionalized by the JDP governments and KADEM, has put forward a pious discourse that opposes egalitarian feminism, yet advocates for women’s growing appearance in public realm, active participation in business and social life. It refuses the definition of women only as mothers and/or wives, while simultaneously, keeps these issues in circulation and advocates for a religious solution to all problems regarding women. This is mainly accomplished by the appropriation of Women’s Human Rights discourse and the refusal of feminism. Despite this clear refusal of any affiliation with feminism, it articulates a crucial “justice beyond equality” approach that seeks solutions to problems of women within Islam. This presentation will highlight the characteristics and dilemmas of this highly important yet neglected issue of women and Islam in Turkey.

Gülşen Çakıl Dinçer is a Research Assistant at the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Department, Adiyaman University. She received both her BA and MA degree in Sociology from Sakarya University. Currently she is working on her dissertation thesis “Islamist Women’s Movement in Turkey from 1970’s to Present” at the Department for General Sociology and Methodology, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul.
Diliara Brileva

Writing visual history of Turkey: «glorious history» in mainstream cinema vs «complicated history» in arthouse films

This paper is devoted to the formation of «different histories» of Turkey in modern Turkish cinema. On the one hand, the modern Turkish mainstream cinematography is a field for broadcasting the «glorious history» of Turkey both inside the country and abroad. Historical films shift the focus of domestic audiences from modern problems to the «glorious history» of Turkey both inside the country and abroad. On the one hand, the modern Turkish mainstream cinematography is a field for broadcasting the «glorious history» of Turkey both inside the country and abroad. Historical films shift the focus of domestic audiences from modern problems to the «glorious history» of Turkey both inside the country and abroad.

At the same time, the new Turkish arthouse films focus on the complicated moments of the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey and the aroused questions concerning the Greek, Armenian or the Kurdish minorities. In addition, niche films are a place of expressing critical attitude to the «traditional» vision of the history of Turkey. Withal, the disagreement of the contemporary Turkish -Turkish-speaking, but not always ethnically Turkish - creative intelligentsia with the opinion of the Party on the interpretation of history is a part of the general resistance of this part of society. In conditions of Islamization in modern Turkey, arthouse films are often the arena of the expression of cultural resistance for the secular creative intelligentsia. An important feature of the development of the Turkish niche cinema is the fact that the number of female directors is gradually increasing.

Josh Carney

Resurrection as reaction: competing visions of Turkey's (proto) Ottoman past in Magnificent Century and Resurrection Ertuğrul

The Turkish TV dramas Magnificent Century (Muhteşem Yüzyıl) and Resurrection Ertuğrul (Diriliş Ertuğrul) share a number traits: both reprise the country’s Ottoman (or proto-Ottoman) past by focalizing the story of a heroic figure, both raised the ire of critics for their lack of historicity, and both have been highly successful, ruling ratings on the same competitive Wednesday night prime time slot, with Resurrection coming in to take Century’s place after that show left the air. Despite these similarities, the projects represent quite different takes on the Ottoman past and the issue of history’s role in the Turkish present. While Century arguably partakes in what Svetlana Boym calls reflective nostalgia, Resurrection is a highly restorative project. This article details the differences between these projects and explain their success in light of the shifting political environment in Turkey. It begins with a brief characterization of Magnificent Century and the “problem” that it posed for a conservative government that was deeply invested in an idealized Ottoman past. I next turn to Resurrection Ertuğrul, a clear government reaction to Century, and explain that it succeeds where other imitators failed due to the careful choice of a hero with a relatively blank historical slate. Finally, the paper argues that Resurrection practices a different attitude towards history than does Century, heralding for a government that not only seeks to glorify and idolize the past, but also to claim ownership of it. The politics of culture are central to these competing visions of the present through the past, and it concludes with an examination of the ways in which Resurrection has penetrated everyday life in contemporary Turkey.
Between resistance and surrender: a comparison of 1980s and 2010s satirical magazines

This paper draws on the PhD thesis Laughing Matters: Mainstream Political Cartoons under the Military Regime of the Early 1980s in Turkey to present an up-to-date reflection on the political potential of graphic satire in Turkey. The thesis grew out of the question of if and how it was possible that a culture of dissent could exist in Turkey's mainstream under the authoritarian and censoring context of the military regime of 1980 to 1983. Central to the investigation has been graphic satire, in particular the one proposed by the best-selling satirical weekly Gırgır that hosted illustrations by amateurs and political prisoners, in addition to professional cartoonists. The study revealed that under the military rule the political potential of satire could be successfully exploited. Despite the regime's repressive apparatus, its severe and unpredictable censorship regimen did not stop the papers from continuing to exist and resist. The research covers Turkey's graphic satire, political regimes, dissent, repression nor giving up its well-established presence in the mainstream market. The paper now proposes a comparison of the satirical landscape of that time with the one of the years 2012 to 2017, a period that has been posing different yet similarly dramatic challenges to both press freedom and the expression of political dissent. How is political resistance managed to carry on with a culture of dissent – neither succumbing to repression nor giving up its well-established presence in the mainstream market? The paper now proposes a comparison of the satirical landscape of that time with the one of the years 2012 to 2017, a period that has been posing different yet similarly dramatic challenges to both press freedom and the expression of political dissent. How is mainstream political satire coping with Erdoğan's increasingly repressive regime? Is the strategy adopted by Gırgır in the early 1980s still successful? Is it still adopted at all? What does the current state of satirical magazines reveal with respect to the broader question of resistance through the arts? We will answer these questions by following the trajectory of major satirical magazines such as Gırgır, Penguen and LeMan.

‘Actually Existing Conservatism’ in Turkey: Ethnography of the ‘Majority’ at the Peripheries

‘Political power is one thing. Social and cultural power is another. We have been in power successively for the last 14 years yet we still have problems about our social and cultural power.’ (May, 2017); this is an excerpt from a speech where Erdoğan complains from not being able to establish social and cultural hegemony in Turkey. In fact, the concept of ‘cultural hegemony’ has become a significant part of common parlance through which diverse fields of politics, media and academia express, criticize and debate about the ever-changing ideological narratives of the secular/modern versus religious/traditional divide, as the politics appears to be getting more polarized and alliances are at stake currently. The portrayal of society in Turkey, as divided into ‘secular’ and ‘Islamic/conservative’ oppositional cultural poles, is symptomatic of the class blind analysis overlooking cultural complexities. Yet still, with a careful eye at the risk of reifying categories, the question of ‘how do these enclaves translate into practices, perceptions and negotiations?’ deserves to be inquired. Based on a 14 months long ethnographic study conducted in Keçiören, one of the oldest, traditional districts of Ankara, which has been transformed into a right wing stronghold under Islamist control within the last three decades; this papers aims to address the subtle processes that manifest and reproduce class-cultural hierarchies from the perspective of the masses or the ‘silent’ majority that have situated at the peripheries of the social. Drawing from class-based familial and spatial experiences and appropriations of the lower-middle classes, The presentation will discuss how and in what ways does the emerging lower middle class conservative culture embody, reproduce, accommodate, and invent itself in the everyday life. In pursuit of this effort, it will incorporate diverse vignettes from the field study to reflect the demographic, socio-cultural and political factors shaping the diverse conservative cultural images within the lower-middle class fractions in Keçiören.
Politics of Nostalgia: The New Urban Culture in Hamamönü and Hamamarkası Regions of Ankara

Petek Onur

Hamamönü and Hamamarkası regions in Ulus, the historical centre of Ankara, have been going through remarkable restoration and renovation processes led by Altındağ Municipality since 2007. In the restored buildings new shops, cafés, restaurants, hotels as well as museums are opened and the region is being (re)discovered by the residents of Ankara. Compared to the historical neighbourhoods of Ankara Citadel, which has been going through fragmented restoration and transformation processes during the last 30 years, this new touristic centre is characterized by neo-Ottomanist cultural practices, neo-liberal economic activities and Islamic connotations. The regions stand out as spatial embodiment of the contemporary ruling politics of Turkey with all their social and cultural networks of power. The presentation will be based on the ongoing research project that investigates the (re)created nostalgia culture in Hamamönü, Hamamarkası and Ankara Citadel regions with a comparative approach. The research project involves a fieldwork covering in-depth interviews with the owners and employees of the shops, cafés, restaurants, hotels and museums, and observations in the public events in these regions. Additionally, it involves a discourse analysis of these establishments’ web sites and social media accounts. The fieldwork data which is obtained so far suggest that Hamamönü and Hamamarkası regions and their contemporary urban culture appear as a perfect example of restorative nostalgia, which is defined by Svetlana Boym as a nostalgia that promises the rebuilding of the lost past and filling the spaces in the memory with new constructions. As Boym argues, restorative nostalgia is at the core of nationalist and religious politics. On the basis of the empirical data and this theoretical perspective, the presentation will portray the cultural outcomes of the urban transformation processes in these regions and discuss the role of political dynamics that deeply influence and even shape these outcomes.

No Dancing in the Streets: Staging Roman Belonging in Turkey and the World

Danielle V. Schoon

Dance plays a central role in the construction and presentation of Roman (“Gypsy”) identity in contemporary Turkey as the Romanlar face conflicting claims to belonging in the city, the nation, Europe, and the “global village.” While Turkey’s Romanlar are being integrated into minority politics, they are also facing the dissolution of their communities, traditional occupations, and cultural life as privatization and land reforms dislocate the urban poor to state housing units in the name of improvement and ‘renewal.’ At the same time, international rights organizations are supporting counter-hegemonic narratives via minority and human rights discourses that both enable and limit the boundaries of Roman identity. This paper presents several cases, based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, that locate the intersection of urban space, state-led reforms, and Roman belonging in dance practice in Turkey. The approach analyzes the means by which Roman dance practices are transmitted: no longer intended for a closed network of performers linked by physical space (the neighborhood) and a local economy, now dance performs Roman identity on national and global stages. It explores the impact of the move from streets to stages on the dance itself, as bodies turn to face new audiences.

Danielle V. Schoon is a Lecturer in Dance and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the Ohio State University. She received a dual PhD in Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Arizona and an MA in Dance from UCLA. Her work explores the politics of Roman (“Gypsy”) identity and civic engagement in Turkey.
Kaya Akyıldız

“Advantageous, Privileged, and Hegemonic”: A Sketch of Legal/Institutional, Political and Cultural Limits of Sunni Supremacism in Contemporary Turkey

In recent years, minority issues and the unspoken privileges, and advantages paired with Turkishness, Sunniness and maleness in Turkish society are being debated by various actors. The attempts in terms of relating the minority issues and majority question to Turkishness, Sunniness and maleness by taking cues from whiteness studies and queer theory.

The commonsense of belonging to a community, exclusionary politics in dealing with the other and awareness of privileges form the aforementioned majority identities, i.e. Turkishness, Sunniness and maleness. Thus, in construction of privileged and advantageous identities minority had been delineated through ethno-religious line and this form division was harmonious with the millet system. Although it was abolished during the 19th century, the millet system is still idealized in the nationalist/nostalgic representation of the Ottoman past.

This presentation aims to shed some light on the logic of what the author referred to as Sunni supremacism that generates a set of privileges and advantages for some and suppresses others. To grasp the current condition of Sunni supremacism, the presentation will try to explore the politics of religion, legal/institutional adjustments and some aspects of Sunni supremacists discourse in the Justice and Development Party era in contemporary Turkey.

Kumru Toktamış

Violent Re-entrenchments: The tensions within the Power Bloc as revealed in Imralı Minutes.

While Gramsci conceptualized the contrast between two strategies of War of Maneuver and War of Position in reference to class conflict, a protracted process of slow brewing conflict where forces seek to gain grounds can be a model to be used to understand the relationship between two seemingly unconnected yet violently linked confrontations that have been shaping the contemporary society and politics in Turkey. The Peace/Resolution negotiations of 2013 and 2015 at Imralı with A. Öcalan were actually a process of contentious re-entrenchment, including a severe settlement of accounts within the power bloc of the ruling party. That tag of war between R.T. Erdogan’s leadership and the Gulenists, which became somehow public in late 2013 and came into light during the coup attempt of July 2016, was already well known and persistently expressed by the Kurdish interlocutors throughout the negotiations because already existing violent aspects of that tension were part of the everyday life in the Kurdish town and cities. The coalition partners that presented themselves as civil society/community solidarity groups in Western Turkey were actually effective actors of state violence among the Kurdish speaking regions of the country. A close reading of the minutes of negotiations between 2013-2015 reveal that, in this contentious entrenchment government actors aimed disarm the rebels and at the same time engage in a face-off to eliminate one another. Following the relational traditions of the Contentious Politics perspective, and inspired by Gramscian “war of positions,” the paper argues that the Peace/Resolution process was a dynamic and violent (re-)entrenchment, i.e. a relational and putative firm position and discourse that is fortified through institutional arrangements, policies and public discourse that is transgressive with respect to the actions of the others. An entrenchment is interplay between seemingly fixed and steady yet fluid positions due to its transgressive nature. Such re-entrenchment revealed the cracks within the power bloc, re-positioned power alliances within the state, and established a new policy vis-à-vis the Kurdish politics which incorporates new forms of violent repression and co-existence.

Kaya Akyıldız got his B.Sc. in Political Science from Middle East Technical University and his MA in Turkish Literature from Bilkent University. After finishing his PhD in Philosophy, Interpretation and Culture Program at Binghamton University in 2011, he has returned to Turkey and is currently working as an Asst. Prof. at Bahçeşehir University’s Sociology Department. Akyıldız is also a member of the editorial board at Toplum ve Bilim Journal.

Kumru Toktamış, Associate Professor for Social Science and Cultural Studies at the Pratt Institute, worked for the Human Rights Watch for more than a decade documenting human rights violations in Turkey in 1980s and 1990s and wrote a dissertation on the relationship between Turkish state formation and the Kurdish mobilizations since the end of the World War I. She is the co-editor of a book on the 2013 protests in Turkey, entitled ‘Everywhere Taksim’ with Isabel Davis in 2015. She is one of the signatories of the statement by the Academics for Peace who, as a group, was awarded Aachen Peace Prize in 2016. Currently, Toktamış is working on the topics such as violence as politics, women in Muslim worlds and democratization/de-democratization.
Caner Tekin

Representations of Ottoman History in Contemporary Turkey and the Case of Abdulhamid II: Towards a New Historical Authenticity?

The presentation is part of the author’s long-term project exploring the changing representations of Ottoman history in Turkish memory politics, is based on the argument that historical authenticity shifts to the fame, prosperity, and virtues of the Ottoman Empire in memory politics, and this shift occurs in accord with the current political program to promote an alternative national identity. Political camps representing Islamic conservatism in Turkey, whose successor is the Justice and Development Party (AKP) being in power since 2002, had the objective of promoting an identity predicated on the value of Ottoman history. In order to achieve this objective, they harked back to the Ottoman past mainly in Islamic terms and glorified certain historic figures in political discourse.

The earlier conceptions of historical authenticity, expressed until the 2000s, had juxtaposed the emphases on Turkish and Ottoman militarism on the one hand and secular revolutions during the early republican period, on the other. Although the history politics of AKP overlaps with the earlier representation in certain points, today it lays a specific emphasis on the Islamic aspect of Ottomanism. A striking example is the representation of the life and power of Abdulhamid II, the sultan reigning the late Ottoman era. The representation of Abdulhamid as promoted by the government is substantially different than the earlier descriptions, as the sultan’s Islamic and ostensibly ‘anti-imperialist’ characteristics increasingly come to the fore. In my presentation I will look into the portrayals of Abdulhamid in digital media, including the history curricula and textbooks in high school education and TV broadcast, and in official memory politics. The paper first compares, the references given to Abdulhamid II within some of the history curricula and textbooks published from the early 1930s to date, and focus particular attention onto the history curriculum introduced in 2015 to the high-school education as a radical change of direction in history politics. It also mentions the memorial diplomacy in Turkey recently involving the commemoration of Abdulhamid II and the recent government-promoted examples in movie industry.

Caner Tekin is a member of the Centre for Mediterranean Studies at the Ruhr University Bochum, where he received his doctoral degree in November 2016. He worked previously at the Georg-Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Brunswick/Germany as a postdoctoral fellow. He is also a review editor working for H- Nationalism, the online scholarly forum on nationalism studies. His research interests revolve around the linkages between nationalisms, international migration, and politics of historiography. He has recently co-edited the volume entitled History and Belonging: Representations of the Past in Contemporary European Politics (with Stefan Berger), which will be published in June by Berghahn Books. At present, he is teaching the seminar ‘Contemporary Turkey and Migration’ again at the Ruhr University Bochum.

Erol Sağlam

Remembering Through Places: Treasure Hunts and National History in Contemporary Turkey

Famous for the strength of reactionary Turkish nationalism, almost everyone in Trabzon vehemently distance themselves from Rum [Greeks], who inhabited the littoral until the 1920s, and ardently claim Turkish heritage. This strong identification with Turkishness, intriguingly, goes hand in hand with the fact that various communities in the region continue to discreetly speak Romeika [Rumca]—a local variant of Greek with archaic linguistic features. This ‘discreet’ presence of Romeika and the ambiguities it generates, the paper argues, configure locals’ relations to the landscape and instigate a prevalent socio-cultural practice, treasure hunts [defineciliğ].

As quests for buried troves of past communities, treasure hunts have rarely been subjected to scholarly analysis, since they unwaveringly destroy archaeological remnants and, hence, are dismissed as calamitous folk myths that reflect popular desire for material riches. How these engagements keep memories of past communities alive in intimate but ‘haunted’ places (as in one’s own home or village), for this reason, has never been studied. Many locals in Trabzon, for instance, incessantly look for troves of Greeks in their own houses and villages, while claiming that these intimate spaces have only been inhabited by Turks. How are we to comprehend the ambiguity generated by the very proximity of these imaginary sites of treasures?

Drawing on an ethnographic research on Romeika-speaking communities in Trabzon, this research explores the practices and politics of memory in contemporary Turkey. The paper argues that, rather than simply being quests for material riches, treasure hunts might be read as a modality of remembrance through which collective memories, banished from the public for the sake of a unified national identity, are retained in material and corporeal forms. Through these quests, I argue, locals can remember the past communities by situating their memory in intimate spaces without antagonizing the state and nationalist ideology. This analysis reveals both the diverse ways in which Turkish nationalist communities in contemporary Turkey preserve Romeika and how “subversive” collective memories are accommodated in the face of national historiography and its erasures.

Erol Sağlam has completed his PhD at Birkbeck, University of London in 2017 and is an affiliated fellow at CCISC (UK). His dissertation explored processes of subject formation at the intersection of nationalism, collective memory, gender, and Islamic piety through an ethnographic research in Trabzon, northeastern Turkey. His current research interests deal with treasure hunts, conspiracy theories, masculinities, and Romeika.

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